



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0497KY-1 for Mercer County Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	7
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The District has articulated a clear and credible approach to the goals it has set to accelerate student achievement, deepening student learning, and increasing equity through personalized student learning. The District has set a reform vision by implementing a Personal Learning Environment model for its students which entails students direct their learning through its MCVision21 initiative and the District will use several resources including the latest technology to provide personalized student support. However, the District has not provided sufficient evidence to show that its reform vision builds on the four core educational assurance areas. The District did not describe within its reform vision how it retains effective teachers and principals and how it has turned around its lowest performing schools.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The District demonstrated a strong approach that there is support for the implementation of a high quality plan through the proposed employment of a District Program Coordinator that will report directly to the superintendent at the LEA level and two additional program coordinators that will serve K-5 and 6-12 respectively.</p> <p>The District's approach in selecting its participating schools was to look at the number of students that were receiving free or reduced lunch and those that were the most at-risk and determined that it needed to include all the schools, including its alternative schools, within the District. In addition, the District recognized the need to continue the partnership with its neighboring school district and included all their students since both serve a transient student body within its county due to its rural location.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	0
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant did not address how the reform proposal would help the applicant reach its goals or how the District would translate the work being done at the participating schools to the entire district because a narrative was not included by the District providing this information in its application.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Improved student learning and performance is likely to result based on the District 's plan an vision to use various data sources and assessments to track student growth.</p> <p>The District has set ambitious yet achievable goals based in part on achieving them through summative assessments it will utilize such as EXPLORE, PLAN and ACT and through the achievable goals set and data provided on its graduation rates, drop out rates and college enrollment rats that demonstrated the District's approach in increasing college enrollment rates.</p> <p>The District lacked overall data and a description of the District's goals in improving student learning and increased equity for its students with disabilities and English language learner students, which is a concern on whether the District will provide increased equity for these groups of students.</p> <p>The District provided detailed information in the annual goals it set due to the unique situation all students in its District face because no group of students meet or exceed the College Readiness benchmarks.</p>		

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	7
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The District did not provide sufficient evidence in advancing student learning and achievement because the District provided two years of data instead of the four years required, thus a clear record of success in advancing student learning has not been established.</p> <p>The District described and listed programs that it has implemented in its schools to advance student learning outcomes and close achievement gaps.</p> <p>The District was vague in the significance the programs listed have played in reforming its lowest-achieving and lowest-performing schools.</p> <p>The District described and listed tools it uses to provide student data to students, parents and educators that assist in improving student instruction and services.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The District demonstrated a high level of transparency in addressing where the public could access the salary information and expenditures provided in the criterion by providing links and the process for posting budgets once approved by the school board.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	7
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The District has demonstrated that it has the autonomy to move forward with the full implementation of its MCVision21 by identifying the regulatory language in existence at the Mercer County School Board level and statutory language provided by the Kentucky Department of Education. However, sample policies mentioned in its narrative were not provided for evaluation.</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	7
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The District described in detail how it obtained meaningful input from its stakeholders beginning with the creation of a core team made up of stakeholders that came together to develop the RTTT-D application.</p> <p>Letters of support and signatures from school teachers and principals provide further evidence that the District involved key stakeholders.</p> <p>The District described the input solicited by its teachers, principals and parents. However, the District did not describe how input received was evaluated and incorporated into the final application drafted and how the District responded back to input received.</p>		
(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	4
<p>(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The District provided evidence in analyzing how its plan will be implemented by identifying that there was a gap in the number of students taking gifted and talented courses including a significant number of low income students not having access to these classes. Through the analysis done, the District will be able to implement a high-quality plan that includes personalized learning environments, specifically for its low income students, to address the gap identified.</p>		

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	14

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The District has provided evidence of a plan to move to a standard-based mastery system through personalized instruction. The District described its strategy for ensuring that its students are provided personalized instruction through their Individualized Learning Plan program.

However, the District did not describe how it will convey to students that the work done in their personalized instruction will prepare them for college and career and the District did not describe whether students will be provided a variety of instructional approaches to support their personalized instruction. In addition, the District did not describe how students will receive high-quality content aligned to college and career ready standards.

The district did describe accommodations provided to its high-need students through its Response to Intervention plan and the District described the mechanisms it has in place to support students in using tools to track and manage their learning through the use of the ILP program.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	15
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The District provided a well thought out professional development schedule for its teachers and administrators describing activities to be conducted, the hours its teachers would spend per activity and the time line for obtaining the professional development which also includes training for the neighboring school district's teachers.

The District provided evidence of how participating educators will engage in training that supports capacity to implement learning environments throughout the grant process through the use of content facilitators and a "train the trainers" component and ensured that educators have access to and know how to use the necessary tools to accelerate student progress through professional development in Kagan strategies.

While the District described how it will provide high-quality teachers to its special education students, the District was vague in describing other areas of specialized teaching availability such as English Language Learner instruction.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	12

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The District has described in detail the practices that it will use to facilitate personalized learning by support its central office will provide to the participating schools through the employment of a District Program Coordinator to communicate the responsibilities of the District and the schools to ensure student growth; the employment of several Building Specialists who will work within each school they are assigned to form leadership teams; the establishment of a District Calendar Committee; the use of the Excellence for All program to assist its students in demonstrating mastery on a subject; and using cross curricular activities for all its students including its sub groups.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	7
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(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The District has provided evidence that its school infrastructure supports personalized learning through the establishment of a virtual online school as part of its MCVision21 and ensuring not only access to technology by its students parents and educators but support through the employment of full time technology staff. However, the District did not describe how it will provide access to technology to parents that speak a language other than English.

The District provided evidence that parents can access student records through portals and the use of notebooks will allow the data to be used in other electronic learning systems.

The District provided evidence that it schools to have access to an interoperable system to share data between the district and the schools through the CIITS System.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
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(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	12
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The District clearly described how its School Coordinators will ensure the effectiveness of an improvement process by giving stakeholders access to monitor and comment on the progress the District is making through the grant provided. However, the District did not address how the quality of its investments would be shared with the public.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	3
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The District provided strategies that will effectively assist it in ongoing communication with its stakeholders, but it is unclear on who the point person(s) will be initiating and carrying out these strategies.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	2
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The District provided ambitious yet achievable performance measures. The chart provided in the narrative described the District's rationale for selecting the measures, and the grade bands. But, the measures were not provided by subgroups and did not include the detailed data required under this criteria.</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	0
<p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>It was not apparent how the District would evaluate the effectiveness of investments made, productively use time, staff, money, or other resources in order to improve results because the District did not address this criteria in the application submitted by the District.</p>		

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	7
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The District has provided a reasonable budget and provided the rationale justifying the budget requested for its project. The District indicated the use of the grant funds per category along with a full description of funds it will use to support the project in terms of personnel, equipment, travel and supplies, among other budget items.</p> <p>The District provided rationale for investments and priorities of each budget category provided and the amount requested, including a description of all funds the District will use to fund the project.</p> <p>The District did not address whether it had any one-time investments versus ongoing operational costs.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	7
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The District provided a high-quality plan for sustainability of the project. The District has provided evidence of a plan for sustainability beyond the three years of the project and has identified sources of funding through the restructuring that will occur in the District that will provide for a building closure providing additional revenue.</p> <p>However, the District did not provide evidence whether there will be ongoing financial support to the District for the project by its local and state leaders due to a committee formed that will be looking at additional resources for sustainability and will not provide their findings until the end of the year.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
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Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	8
<p>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The District has provided detailed evidence to support its sustained partnership with the Comprehensive Care Center and that will assist the District in providing additional student and family supports to address the social, emotional, or behavioral needs of its students and has met the competitive preference priority.</p> <p>The District has identified the most important issues its students are facing that can be handled in partnership with the Comprehensive Care Center such as bullying and increased suicide rates.</p> <p>The selected indicators will be tracked through attendance and office discipline referrals. However, the District did not address how it will target its resources to students with special needs, English language learners, and low-income students.</p>		

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met
<p>Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The District has addressed how it will provide personalized learning through its MCVision21 project and has identified various tools that its teachers will utilize to support students in becoming college and career ready.</p>		

Total	210	140
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0497KY-2 for Mercer County Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Mercer County has provided extensive details in their narrative on their comprehensive and coherent reform vision called MCVision21. The goals were stated in 4 steps/phases.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The development and implementation of Personal Learning Environment where students and educators will shift from the traditional model to the Personalized Learning Environment model which the applicant calls MCVision 21. 2. District wide Common Core aligned learning that allows students a variety of assessments, real-life learning experiences, hands on learning, global classrooms and real world problem solving. 3. Vertically aligned assessment tools from K-12. 4. Rigorous leaning through technology based classrooms. <p>The Mercer County application provides a clear and credible approach based on common and individual tasks related to student academic interest. The plan lays out the hiring and training of staff and educators, the roll out of technology to students, empowering stakeholders and moving classrooms from "traditional" to "21st Century". This plan gives specific details</p>		

and is very coherent in the aspirations of a reform vision.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)

10

10

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant presented a description of how applicants were chosen and a list of participating schools, including student demographics. The applicant selected these schools based upon school data, and the need to teach and reach the "at-risk" population. The grant money would be used to ensure that 10 schools ranging from Pre-K to twelfth grade would be involved in the Mercer County reform efforts. The chart provides appropriate information regarding the number of students that will be involved in the reform and utilizing the grant fund. The proposal will allow high-quality reform to take place and to provide a new way of learning and teaching for the Mercer County district students.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)

10

2

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

This section is missing from the application, yet in the other sections of this application parts of the plan are described. However, it does not give enough evidence to address the criteria for this area of the application.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)

10

9

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Mercer County Schools have provided a comprehensive chart of achievable annual goals that are equal to and or exceed State targets with a projection beyond the grant funding. The estimated and ambitious annual goals presented in the narrative and chart are clearly defined and stated. The charts show the achievement gaps in the subgroups according to state of Kentucky and the school district. Graduation rates show steady improvement as the years progress and an explanation of the inconsistent baseline data for the graduation rate was provided. The data for the college enrollment was strong and achievable and the push to ensure that students were attending a college in state and or out of state was evident.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	8
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>Mercer County has provided a strong narrative detailing the improvements being made and future anticipated improvements in closing the gap, increasing achievement and increasing school graduation rates/college enrollment and retention. They continued to show support for low-performing schools via the community, other grants and state/local agencies. The data is available to parents, students and educators through a variety of sources. However the applicant did not provide four years of prior data. Therefore a clear record of success is not evident.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	3
(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>There was no evidence of the actual personnel salaries for the school district in the narrative, the application stated to refer to the school's website. The narrative also directed you to the the appendix where there were several examples of the current salaries for instructional staff and teachers.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	5
(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>Mercer County provided some evidence of autonomy in this section of the application. However, although the applicant asserts that they have autonomy they do not clearly provide evidence of this autonomy.</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	9

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

There was evidence of a variety of stakeholders and their engagement and support in the development of the Race to the Top grant for the Mercer County School District. Documentation showing the support of local community leaders, educators, local governmental officials, parents, student and other stakeholders for the Race to The Top District Competition is included in this application. Stakeholders were involved from the beginning process to develop the application. The stakeholders provided insight, feedback and support to the Mercer County School District. The school district kept parents, educators and other community members involved by holding a variety of meetings. The applicant had support from over 90% of teachers and teacher's suggestions were also taken into consideration as part of the development of the grant application. Several letters of support from key stakeholders are located in the appendix.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	4
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(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant demonstrates evidence of a high-quality plan that identifies the learning gaps for all students and the subgroups that are the focus of the application for Race to the Top. The District has given some indication of the proposed initiatives that will happen because of grant monies, but they note that these will build on current initiatives happening throughout their district. Mercer County will move toward an Individual Learning Plan for grades six through twelfth. The ILP will assist students, teachers and parents to guide students towards their career interests. The application listed several programs that are already underway but then focused on the two programs necessary for personalized learning environments, ILP and MAP.

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	16

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Mercer County provided a strong sense of direction and foundation of their support with parents and educators and the strategies needed to create student access and success to track and manage their own learning. The implementation of the MAP and the ILP will help students have stronger ownership of their learning and help teachers develop better lessons to instruct students. The shift from traditional grading to standards-based grading will ensure that students are proving mastery of that particular skill and individualized learning plan. The shift allows students to master each academic concept and focus on their career/college readiness program. The implementation for the career/college readiness track is focused by using the MAP program for students. Mercer County will create a coalition for students and teachers, which will reinforce the students learning and owning their success. The coalition will help guide students toward career and college readiness classes.

The vagueness of how teachers will be trained and used in the new programs clouded the implementation for a high-quality plan. A lot of working parts and plans were presented, yet the process and plan of actually implementing student tracking was vague.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	20
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Mercer County provides detailed information about their plan for implementing and their reasoning in the teaching and learning section of their application. The application goes into thorough detail about the district's plan to provide and phase in much needed strategies and improvements throughout their district. The narrative and chart clearly focus on teacher development, lesson planning, and teacher instruction, describing professional development trainings for teachers to use the MAP and the ILP effectively. The PD will also train teachers for the CIITS system and RI. Although this is clearly a work in progress the snapshot today provides evidence of a strong vision.

The narrative also focuses on how to strengthen student engagement and learning by updating technology and training educators and parents to effectively use the new technology. A new evaluation system will be implemented for the teachers that will reflect the strengths and weaknesses of students, to help drive instruction that will close the achievement gap.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	15
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Mercer County provided a complete description for each section of this portion of the application. Mercer County, Hugh Jones Technology Center and Burgin Independent County have established the infrastructure to support implementation. The partnership will provide structure to execute the grant. The schools will still have autonomy over their calendars and planning. Several new key component personnel will be added and others will be shifted to accommodate the implementation of the plan. The district program coordinator will report to the school board and administrators and service the schools participating in the grant, and the plan establishes two MCVision 21 Specialists for K-5/6-12. Students will be given the opportunity to start using the Virtual school and will continue to change their from the traditional approach to MCVision21. The use of technology will allow students to master skills at their own pace and provide other opportunities to demonstrate mastery. The leadership team will continue to work together to implement the high quality plan and vision. The applicant's narrative provides information about their "Excellence for All" program which encourages high school students to tackle more challenging coursework. Mercer is adapting to multiple ways of demonstrating mastery that will include all students.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	9
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Mercer County presents evidence of the school district's infrastructure needs and planned adjustments to ensure all stakeholders are able to receive the learning resources. The LEA will ensure all students will receive laptops, which will enhance their personalized learning by downloading programs geared toward each student's individual needs. The county is also ensuring that programs will be available if the student does not have internet services.</p> <p>The county already has a system in place where parents and community stakeholders have access to learning resources. The county has proposed to hire a MCVision 21 technician in addition to the three full time technology staff to ensure that technical support is available. Mercer County currently uses the CIITS program to allow parents and students to access student's data electronically.</p> <p>Mercer County has provided specific details about the current infrastructure and support that will enhance student's personalized learning success. The County's vision to effectively use technology to drive instruction in and out of school, to access student records and to provide additional training supports the implementation of a high-quality reform plan.</p>		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	14
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The Mercer County School District presented reasonable information in their narrative to explain the process for adjustments and revisions during their implementation of grant programs. The narrative states the various steps that stakeholders will utilize to give continuous feedback on the progress of projected goals. Mercer County's Race to the Top Leadership team, key stakeholders, parents, educators, community leaders and students will all be able to complete surveys concerning aspects of the grant on a regular basis.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Mercer County provided a chart detailing the ongoing involvement of stakeholders, educators, parents, and the community during implementation of the strategies presented in this application. The narrative states several ways that ongoing communication will be handled through forums, media outlets, parent surveys, student reviews and inventories. Internal and external stakeholders will be able to effectively provide input and feedback throughout the implementation phase.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	5

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The Mercer school district provided 13 performance measurements. The chart shows the rationale, the assessment tools, the data from current years and the goals through the life of the grant and beyond. Many of the performance measures are measures that Mercer already has in place, aligned to the state's common core objectives. The performance measures provide some specific details on how increased success for all students will be obtained. Although the proposed measurement appear strong, it is not clear how the applicant will meet these measures.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	0
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(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

There was no evidence of this section in the application.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	8
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: Although the F1 Budget was located after the F2 budget; the budget table was convincing and feasible. The applicant presented a comprehensive budget and the table identified supportive funds and a breakdown of necessary funds. The rationale for the personnel added was adequate and the proposed budget for operational cost was feasible and sufficient for the implementation of this budget.		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	8
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: There is evidence provided that the local school board and the community will have significant funds available to ensure that the plan continues after the grant money has ended. The narrative describes that the stakeholders are on board to reform the district's educational paradigm. Mercer Board of Education has approved 225 million dollars to fund the programs post grant.		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	9
Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments: Mercer County provided adequate information on the current and future model of the MC Schools and their partnerships within the community to assist students. The community agency and the schools already have working relationship with several programs, such as "Step it Up", Bullying prevention program, suicide prevention and anger management to name a few. The applicant provides targeted performance measures for Mercer County students. The measures are to decrease student referrals/out of school suspensions, to reduce the student suicide rate and to improve student social skills. The strategies to improve results over time are identified in the tables ranging from PBS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Support) to bullying prevention curriculum taught in class. However one weakness of the proposal was that the data was not presented by subgroups for the students. Overall the applicant met the competitive preference priority proving a strong partnership and plan with community agencies in and out of the school.		

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

Mercer County has met the absolute priority in this application through their narrative, tables, graphs and charts. The applicant addressed how they would implement the personalized learning environments and improve their teaching standards. The applicant coherently and comprehensively addresses the tools to support their students in personalized learning and encourage academic success as part of a college/career ready curriculum. Mercer connected with community agencies to ensure the necessary support was present for their students. The assessments will drive instruction, differentiate instruction and personalize learning. Professional development will be offered on a consistent basis. The applicant will seek feedback from community and key stakeholders to guide improvement.

Total	210	169
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0497KY-3 for Mercer County Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	8

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's reform vision somewhat addresses the core educational assurances: standards and assessments are described with Common Core aligned learning outcomes and vertically aligned assessments K-11; it includes professional development for teachers in implementing a Personal Learning Environment Model, in Common Core Standards and 4-C (Collaboration, Communication and Creativity) learning outcomes; the development and implementation of a rigorous system of data collection and analysis is stated with no further explanation; there is no mention of turning around lowest achieving schools.

Within the vision section, the approach to implementation includes clear strategies for accelerating learning for low-achieving students through expanding the existing Response to Intervention program with additional materials, digital reading and math programs and support for individual students. The strategy for accelerating learning for all students, including at risk students, is a cooperative learning approach with expanded opportunities for project-based learning.

Deepening student learning is addressed by inquiry-based learning and project-based experiences. The applicant describes expansion of existing programs, infusion of new technology, Gifted/Talented instructors, addition of world languages curriculum, virtual and actual world travel, work-based experiences and service learning. Similarly, the applicant provides a list of programs designed to further individual student interests.

The reform vision is more clearly articulated in section C2 and in the budget narrative. The vision could be more robust in addressing the core educational assurances.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	5
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(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes the analysis done by district administrators that resulted in all schools participating in the reform project. A list of participating schools is provided. The applicant provides numbers and percentages of students, high need students, low-income families. The requirement for low-income percentage exceeds the grant requirement.

The approach to implementation relies on the hiring of a District Program Coordinator, and two program coordinators, one for K-5 and one for grades 6-12. Six school-level Building Specialists will assist in the implementation of program components, model effective practices, work with students and support teachers. The Building Specialist will establish School Leadership Teams to review disaggregated data on a monthly basis.

The implementation plan does not include a structure to make sure reforms are cohesive and district-wide. Progress made in schools is dependent on the leadership qualities of the Building Specialist. The workload described for the Building Specialist is unrealistic.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	2
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(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:
 This criteria was not addressed separately. The proposal includes all schools in the district so scaling up is not an issue. A Logic Model is not included in the application.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	6
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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:
 The vision is well supported by annual goals that, if met, would demonstrate improved student performance and increased equity (as measured by improvements by sub-groups).
 The applicant provides baseline and annual goal data using EXPLORE, PLAN and ACT assessments for 8th, 10th and 11th graders respectively, and the IOWA Test of Basic Skills and the Sanford Achievement Test grades 3-8. Improvement goals are ambitious and achievable. The applicant does not include state ESEA targets.
 The applicant provides a convincing rationale for calculating annual goals to decrease achievement gaps. There is no significant difference in achievement between sub-groups; all need improvement.
 The applicant provides baseline and projected graduation rates, explaining that the state recalculated the rate in 2009, skewing the longitudinal data. Goals for increasing graduation rates are ambitious.
 The applicant presents data for post-high school activities including in-state college enrollment, out-of-state college enrollment, vocational/tech, military, work/school combination, employment and unsuccessful. The goal to increase in-state college enrollment is an increase of 13% in five years. The goal is moderately ambitious and achievable.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	4

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:
 The applicant did not include evidence of advancing student learning and achievement and increasing equity in learning and teaching over the past four years.
 The applicant presented an extensive list of programs implemented for one, two or three years. No connection was made between the programs and data indicating student achievement or improvement.
 The applicant described multiple communication tools for making information available to parents, teachers and other stakeholders. Infinite Campus is the tool used for student performance data. The communications tools are diverse, using websites, print materials and face-to-face meetings for information and, to some extent, feedback. It is not clear if participation, instruction or services are improved because student performance data is widely available.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5
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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant demonstrates an acceptable level of transparency, complying with state rules and regulations.

The applicant presents evidence that all school-level expenditures are made public. The Annual Financial Report is available to the public in paper form by request. Individual web links are provided for the Annual Financial Report, for non-personnel expenditures, all salary schedules, and current and past audits.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	7
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant shows evidence that county Board policies and State legal, statutory and regulatory requirements support the conditions and provide the autonomy necessary to implement the proposed personalized learning environments.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	9
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant is successful in engaging many stakeholders in the development of its proposal.

The applicant describes the process of proposal development that included a team consisting of a wide range of school administrators, teachers, plus a parent representative. The framework proposal was shared with school staff and ideas from teachers were incorporated into the proposal. There is no evidence of student input. The county Board of Education approved the proposal understanding that they will be responsible for sustaining components of the project.

Teachers proposed revisions to the proposal to include 2.0 web-based instruction for project-based learning, field trips, district-wide cooperative learning, world languages, elementary STEM curriculum. Those elements are included in the proposal.

The applicant includes copies of signature of teachers documenting 99% support for the proposal.

The applicant documents considerable excitement and support for the proposal with letters of support from students, parents, principals, the chamber of commerce, a major employer and the industrial development authority.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	3
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(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The plan for analysis of the applicant's current status in implementing personalized learning environments is just barely adequate.

The applicant describes current initiatives in place to support personalized learning environments, especially Individual Learning Plans in place for students in grades 6-12 . There is a mention of Professional Learning Communities but no evidence of their effectiveness. The narrative includes intentions to fill gaps by offering new courses, increasing assessment areas, adding professional development, expanding enrollment in virtual classes and increasing staff for gifted instruction. The plan is consistent with the overall goals of the project, but vague in describing any student data, logic behind the reform proposal and the status of teacher capability to implement the project. Extensive data is presented that documents achievement gaps reaching the benchmarks of college- and career readiness measured by EXPLORE, PLAN and ACT.

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	15

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The plan is comprehensive and well-articulated, and includes district-wide strategies that can be personalized for all students.

The applicant describes the intention to increase parental involvement in students' Individual Learning Plans and the shift to standards-based grading system for students to know where they are in mastering content. It is not clear how goal-setting is accomplished or how students or parents will understand how the content is connected to goals linked to college- and career-

ready standards. The applicant shares an example of deeper learning for a student interested in engineering. It is less clear how deeper learning experiences will emerge in other areas of academic interest.

The proposal includes an intent to offer a wider choices of language courses. There is no evidence presented that foreign language classes will contain content of diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives that motivate and deepen individual student learning. The applicant offers a vague and insufficient discussion of how goal-setting, teamwork, perseverance, critical thinking, communication, creativity, and problem-solving will be developed.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	20
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

This is a comprehensive plan for building the capacity of teachers, in groups or individually, to grow in their profession, accelerate student learning and use tools and resources for improvement. The professional development offerings are consistent with the goals described in the narrative. Teachers will have numerous opportunities to learn new approaches including specific technologies, project-based learning, cooperative learning, blended learning -- all strategies that support personalized learning environments for all students. The plan is cohesive and links professional development, data management and analysis, student needs (all students) and instructional strategies and methods. The teacher evaluation tool is extensive and the plan includes ensuring all students have full equitable access to highly effective teachers.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	10

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

There is a reasonable plan for policies and infrastructure to support personalized learning.

The applicant describes how the central district office, with the addition of a Program Coordinator, is organized to provide support and services to participating schools. Further, the applicant will provide Building Specialists for each school who will form a reform-focused leadership team and work with teachers to model and support effective practice. Building Specialists will coordinate with School Based Decision Making Councils already in place that can provide autonomy and flexibility in its governance over schedules, staffing models and school level budgets.

State waivers allow for demonstrated mastery rather than seat time requirements and the proposal objectives move the district in the direction of competency-based learning and performance-based credit. Policies in place prior to implementation of the proposal will allow student demonstration of mastery at multiple times and in multiple ways.

The applicant intends to provide adaptable and accessible learning resources and practices for English Language learners and students with disabilities. Details are not included in the application. The district has little experience in mastery learning and is in the first year of offering virtual courses. This lack of experience presents a challenge for immediate implementation.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	7
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(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The plan minimally addresses the criteria but is limited in its capacity to meet the needs of all students, educators and stakeholders.

The applicant intends to lend laptops to students for home use and to load laptop computers with individualized instructional material for students to take home if the internet is not available. Technical support will be provided by existing tech support staff and by the addition of a dedicated project technician on staff. Technical assistance will also be provided by students in the Information Technology program. The applicant states that the Infinite Campus and the CIITS together are an interoperable data system for resources, instruction and student data, and used to inform instruction and further the goals of the project.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	15
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>There is a clear and compelling plan to ensure continuous improvement.</p> <p>The applicant has a strategy for implementing a rigorous continuous improvement process. Data from multiple assessment will be disaggregated by subgroups to close gaps in reading, math and science. The plan includes a timeline for data review. School-level surveys will collect stakeholder feedback. Revisions will be considered twice per year and presented, also twice per year, at public hearings and made available on the schools' websites.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	4
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>There is a strong and manageable plan for ongoing communication, although slightly one-sided.</p> <p>Communication with stakeholders involves surveys asking for evidence that grant components are in place and are seen as a beneficial and effective. Public input will be sought at public forums biannually. Use of websites, social media, newsletter and local newspapers to share biannual reviews. It is not clear how the stakeholders will gain an understanding of the components of the project in order to offer valuable feedback.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant meets this criteria with 13 performance measures including effective and highly effective teachers and principals, cognitive and non-cognitive measures for PreK-3, college/career readiness, academic growth and social-emotional indicators for grades 4-8 and each required indicator for grades 9-12: FAFSA applications, college- and career-readiness, academic growth and social-emotional indicators.</p> <p>The rationale for each measure is provided. A solid plan is in place to use the information provided by the performance measure data to provide interventions and modifications.</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	0
<p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>A plan to evaluate the funded activities in terms of effectiveness and productivity is not specifically addressed in the proposal.</p>		

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	10
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The budget presented by the applicant meets this criteria to the fullest extent. Investments in personnel, equipment, professional development, learning materials and technology are reasonable and sufficient to implement the project. The overall budget and each project-level budget identify grant and non-grant funds that support the project. Non-grant funds come from diverse sources including state funds, the district general fund, Mercer County Education Foundation, the business community and the Dept. of Juvenile Justice.</p> <p>Each budget item is explained in the budget narrative, stating a rationale and a purpose for each item. In addition, the budget narrative notes whether the expenditure is a one-time investment or an on-going cost.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	7

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The sustainability plan is thoughtful and reasonable.

The applicant outlines how the project will be sustained after the grant term for three years with Board of Education funds for assessments, technology staff person, two gifted teachers, world language program and Quality Core Materials. The plan to sustain professional development is to build capacity within the district during the grant term. Technology upgrades will be funded through state technology funds, Title I and Title II allocations. State funding will be used for virtual classes. Restructuring and the closure of one school building will make resources available.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	6

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

There is a good plan for providing services for students and families experiencing situations or conditions that create obstacles to academic achievement. No educational results are planned or expected.

The applicant describes a long-standing partnership with their local Comprehensive Care Center/Community Based Mental Health. The district provides space for Center staff to provide individual and group counseling sessions, and for training sessions for parents.

The applicant lists seven population-level desired results: reduction in the number of bullying/harrassment incidents, reduction in student risk of suicide, improved peer-to-peer social interaction, improved anger management, decreased symptoms of grief, decreased symptoms of anxiety, depression and behavioral concerns and improved self-esteem. The applicant mentions improvement in attendance as a result of these programs; otherwise evidence was not presented that the desired results are educational results.

The applicant describes a Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS) team in place in each school building. The team meets monthly to review behavioral data.

A plan to integrate educational results is not presented separately. The underlying assumption is that students receiving services and improving the targeted behaviors will be better able to access educational opportunities afforded by the schools.

The district provides training for school staff to recognize symptoms of bullying, suicide, depression, low self-esteem and behavioral problems. Center staff are trained on how to work within a school setting. The applicant does not provide evidence that the mental health services will be expanded beyond the PBIS services.

The goals for reducing the number of discipline referral and out of school suspensions are ambitious and achievable.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant meets Absolute Priority 1. The high quality plan presented in section C2, and in the rationale presented in the budget narrative, ties together the reform vision with an ambitious timeline of professional development and other activities designed to provide strategies, tool and supports for students and educators to achieve the goals of the reform vision.

Total	210	148
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